

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 9, 2025

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
Secretary of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Kennedy,

We write to express our deep concern regarding the reported closures of at least five Office of Head Start (OHS) regional offices across the nation, including the Region II office, which serves the families, children, and grant recipients in New York, New Jersey, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. We strongly urge you to reverse this decision and commit to ensuring that any agency restructuring decisions do not result in service disruption or delays for children and families.

As you know, Head Start and Early Head Start are the only federally supported early care and education programs specifically dedicated to serving low-income households. These programs help to reduce poverty by providing the unique combination of early childhood education and support services that foster social and economic advancement for families. Research consistently shows that children enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start programs are more likely to graduate from high school, attend college, and demonstrate improved social, emotional, and behavioral development. In New York alone, over 50,000 children and their families rely on Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

Head Start programs are administered by OHS within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). OHS provides federal policy direction through regional offices located across the country and play a critical role in ensuring that Head Start and Early Head Start grantees are equipped to deliver high-quality early childhood education, child care, health services, nutrition, and family support. Staff in these offices – including policy, compliance, and fiscal specialists – assist local grantees with program requirements and safety standards and provide training and technical assistance. Head Start grantees rely on these regional offices for the efficient and reliable administration of grant funding, distribution, and oversight.

Employees in at least five regional offices (New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, and Seattle) appear to have received reduction-in-force (RIF) notices. Closing these offices would deprive local Head Start and Early Head Start grantees of these critical services. While this decision may be driven by the goal of improving government efficiency, it could lead to significant delays in program support, undermine service quality, and jeopardize the overall effectiveness of the Office of Head Start.

We strongly urge the Administration to reconsider these closures until a comprehensive plan to replace or supplement these services is developed and shared with the relevant stakeholders. At a

minimum, we ask that you ensure that local Head Start and Early Head Start grantees in Region II have timely and adequate access to the services and support they would typically receive. Additionally, please provide a written response to questions related to continuity and interim services by Wednesday, April 23, 2025.

1. Please confirm and provide the timeline for developing and implementing a comprehensive plan to replace or supplement the services that are provided by staff in these regional offices.
2. Please confirm and provide a description of the interim or temporary services OHS has in place to ensure the continuity of services to local Head Start and Early Head Start grantees?
 - a. How will you ensure grant contracts and renewals, some as soon as May 1, will not be delayed or otherwise disrupted by these personnel decisions?
3. Please provide documentation of OHS's communication with regional staff and local grantees on the status of closures.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



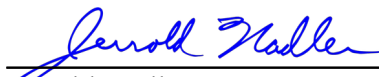
Michael V. Lawler
Member of Congress



Laura A. Gillen
Member of Congress



Grace Meng
Member of Congress



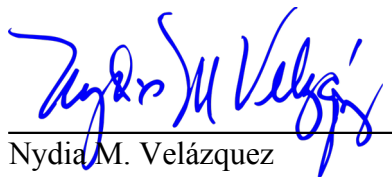
Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



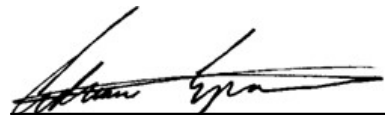
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress



Patrick Ryan
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



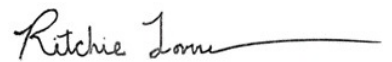
Adriano Espaillat
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